

Being Cold

by JackieJLH

Things Narcissa Malfoy never told her husband.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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"A mind, like a home, is furnished by its owner, so if one's life is cold and bare, he can blame none but himself." ~Louis L'Amour

I'm cold.

Simply... cold.

Your side of the bed is empty now. I stretch out my hand in the middle of the night, subconsciously expecting it to rest on your arm or your warm chest, and find nothing but cool sheets and empty space. I wasn't surprised when the realisation that I was alone woke me in the first few weeks you were gone, or when I cried because of it. But it is starting to worry me that I still wake up looking for you quite often, and it's been six months since you were taken from me.

I don't think I do 'being alone' well at all.

I don't think you understand what it's like for me. You write letters telling me to be strong, to ignore what people are saying about us. You tell me to remember what we're fighting for, and not to give up. But you don't understand... I don't even hear what people are saying. And I will never forget what you were fighting for, or forget my duties in helping to continue that fight. That's not what troubles me....

It's just... the cold. I don't think I will ever get used to it.

Our son is just like you, you know. Not just in the way he looks. He has your eyes, your hair, and yes, even your nose...but he also has your personality: your determination, your ambition. And your passion. He has that same focus about him, that same desire to change things. And just like you, his passion isn't made of the usual fire and warmth. It is pure ice, unforgiving, unrelenting, and unloving. It is made up of anger and greed and hate. That is the one thing that I am sorry he inherited from you, though I will never tell you that, lest you should turn that coldness on me.

I think I may be the one person who has experienced the part of you that isn't frozen. I am the only one that knows your heart is capable of fire, when you allow it to be.

I hate visiting you. I know that sounds terrible. But what warmth you once possessed is gone now.... Your only words are of revenge and anger, and I wonder if you even notice that I'm the one who comes to see you; you look at me with such indifference that sometimes I think you've forgot that you once loved me. You call your son a coward for running, for hiding, and I have to struggle to keep myself from telling you that he is only following the example that was set by his father. I don't think you'd even hear the anger in my voice, though, because you don't care about anything I say anymore.

It is as if the chill that permeates the walls and floor and even the air of the prison has made its way into your very soul and is reflected in your eyes. It's been weeks since I last visited, and still I can't shake the cold feeling that has settled in my bones.

I'm beginning to realise that being cold is more a frame of mind than anything else.

I hate the cold.

I think maybe I'm letting it fill me, though, just like it's filled you. It's a side-effect of the emptiness that I've felt since you were taken away and our son went into hiding. I have nothing left to fight for. You will never come home; I've accepted that. If the war should end in the Dark Lord's favour, he would simply kill you for your transgressions. And if he is defeated, you will remain imprisoned for the rest of your life. Our son is hardly in a better position; if he returns, he too will either be killed or arrested. I can only hope that he has the sense to stay away.

This loneliness, this worry, has left me hollow inside. And for the first time, I understand what it's like to be the personification of cold. I don't think I like it. I don't think I can survive this way. I don't know how you've lived this way for so long... Maybe this is why you don't really seem to be living at all, these days.

I refuse to let myself succumb to this loneliness and anger and emptiness completely, though. I want something better, even if being cold hurts infinitely less.

Our son has a son now. He's living in France with his newborn child and his beautiful wife. I used to cry over the fact that he would never come home to me, but I've come to realise that he's made a new home for himself, and that it's far better than the one he left behind. He is happy, I think. Or at least content. And he's managed to find himself, finally, which is all I could have ever asked for. He's learned to love and to care; things that you never thought to teach him, and I was never able to make him understand.

I can still see you in him: the shape of his face, the curve of his lips when he smiles. But unlike when he was younger, when he strove to be everything that you were, his eyes are warm and full of passion for life. There is no cold inside him, no anger controlling him anymore. I look at him now and I begin to see that maybe, just maybe, he's not really that much like you at all....

They tell me to move on. It's been four years since you were taken away, and they want me to start living my life again. Our son wishes for me to leave our home, move to France, and stay with his family; he wants me to start over in a place where I am not known for my husband's crimes. My sister, always having been one to be blunt, tells me that I should find a lover. She believes I need someone to warm your side of the bed for a while, to inhabit the part of my heart that has always been yours and only yours.

I can think of a thousand reasons not to consider their suggestions. France is so far away, and so different... My life is here. And I've gotten quite used to sleeping in an otherwise empty bed. I don't want someone else in my life right now... I *am* happy being alone; I'm used to being cold. Perhaps the biggest reason I refuse to move on is that, whether I'll admit it to anyone or not, I am trying to *preserve* this cold feeling, this emptiness. After all, it is the only lasting thing you ever gave me.

You're dying. You're still young, *too young* to be dying, but I'm honestly not all that surprised. The damp air and the terrible living conditions you've been forced to endure all these years undoubtedly have taken a toll on your body, and the medical care offered to prisoners is almost nonexistent.

I'm not certain how to handle this...I'm not even sure how I should *feel*. Should I be upset? Probably, yes. Should I cry? Again, yes. And should I be at your bedside, holding your hand during your final hours? Yes... but still I sit at home and pretend that nothing out of the ordinary is happening. I claim that I'm not upset because I learned to cope with missing you many years ago, when I finally stopped visiting you, and that I don't cry because I've already cried every tear for you that I had. But the truth is that I am not the person I was when we were first married. I know how to stop caring now, to push all of my emotions away and be strong; put simply, I know how to be cold.

And I have managed to convince myself that you understand. Seeing you now might crack the ice that's formed inside me, the layer of protection that I use to shield myself from being hurt. I can't let that happen. It is the only thing that allows me to survive. And I know... I hope... that you understand.

It seems fitting that it's snowing the day of your funeral, just as it seems fitting that I'm the only one here to say goodbye. You wouldn't have wanted anyone to pretend to mourn your passing. Though, if I'm honest with myself, I'm pretending too. Maybe that means my heart has finally become as cold as yours was, devoid of all warmth and love. Maybe the emotions, the feelings, and the personality I once had have finally been overshadowed and destroyed by the ice that has settled itself inside me over the years.

Deep down, I'm ashamed of being cold.

But I think I've forgotten how else to be.

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